

Final instructions for Christian living (Hebrews 13:18–25)

The events which we commemorate during the Easter season drive us to focus on what God in Christ has done for us. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to be the perfect High Priest with the perfect sacrifice for sin. This has been the focus of Hebrews. Entrust yourself to Christ and hold to your faith. Holding to that faith will also result in living that faith, doing that for which the believer was created (cf. Ephesians 2:8–10). And so in his final words to the Hebrews the author expresses some of his desires and requests, instructions to them for Christian living.

I. *Pray (13:18–19)*

Prayer is commanded of the believer (e.g., 1 Thess 5:17) and the author of Hebrews gives insight into prayer and praying.

1. *A clear conscience gave him the freedom to ask for prayer (v.18).* Like the apostle Paul (cf. 2 Cor 1:12), the author (and probably his associates) had a clear conscience in the way they had conducted their lives and fulfilled their responsibilities. A clear conscience frees us as well to ask freely for the prayer of others.
2. *The author's prayer request was not "super-spiritual", but simply for his restoration to them.* This was something they all would enjoy and not necessarily something known as the "will of God." This shows us the freedom which we have in making requests to God, whether it is for our "daily bread" or asking and adding "if it be your will."

II. *Rely upon God for serving (13:20–21)*

The author's prayer for the recipients was that God may equip them to do His will. They needed to rely upon God to serve Him and from this prayer we can draw three conclusions about relying upon God.

1. *Reliance is necessary because God equips the believer with everything good to do His will.* This was the pattern in Christ (cf. 10:5, 7). And only God can give what is needed to do His will. It is part of His design in salvation (cf. Eph 2:8–10; Phil 2:13). He works in the believer what is necessary to please Him. This is all through what Christ did on the cross and continues to do.
2. *Reliance upon God is logical.* 1) As the God of peace only He can give peace (cf. Phil 4:6–7). 2) As the God who raised Jesus from the dead, He is powerful enough for any task. 3) As the God who satisfied His own justice by the sacrifice of Christ, the blood of the eternal covenant, and publically declared it by the resurrection, the believer can be assured that He will do all He has promised. 4) As the God who has provided the Good Shepherd (John 10), the great Shepherd of the sheep, He can logically be trusted when we rely on Him.
3. *Reliance upon God brings glory to God.* "To whom be glory" probably speaks of glory to God (cf. 13:15), though in the context of the letter glory to Christ would not be inappropriate. Relying upon anything but God robs God of His glory which He says He will not give to another.

This is the Christian life, relying upon God to His glory, recognizing that all our toil is energized by God (cf. Col 1:29), and thus being pleasing to God.

III. *Listen to the Word (13:22)*

Listening to or heeding the Word of God is one way of relying upon Him. A "word of exhortation" is more like a sermon (cf. Acts 13:15). Hebrews was short for a sermon, but with enough challenges that its sound doctrine might be resisted (cf. 2 Tim 4:3): sobering reminders, intellectually challenging discourses, and five "heavy" warning passages. So they, along with us, are urged to bear with it, that is, take it seriously.

IV. *Nurture fellowship (13:23–24)*

News about Timothy and the exchange of greetings was a way of nurturing their relationships. Their restricted travel and communication made it important to take advantage of opportunities to nurture fellowship.

All of our salvation is only by the grace of God, a fact which is brought into perspective by the closing benediction, "The grace be with all of you." By God's grace you can begin the journey and by God's grace you can travel the path, keeping the faith, as the author of Hebrews exhorts.

Questions for further thought and discussion:

- Give examples from Scripture about right things to pray for. Do you pray this way? Why/why not?
- From the context of Hebrews, what was the will of God that the recipients needed God's equipping to do? Do you need God's equipping in these areas? How can you get it?
- What are you doing to heed God's Word? What would you recommend to others?
- How will you nurture fellowship among believers this week?